



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

postulating faith our depth of spiritual nature. For the rest, it may perhaps be taken as a confirmation of the charge that we are unanxious to rebut it.

DICKINSON S. MILLER.

PHILADELPHIA.

---

### THE IDEA OF PROGRESS.\*

THERE is none of us, I suppose, who does not, in some way or other, hope that he is making progress, or that progress is being made with some plan or work in which he is interested. It is the common characteristic of human life to look forward. "Man," as it has been said, "partly is, but wholly hopes to be." And this common characteristic is one that has been specially emphasized in recent generations, more particularly in connection with what has come to be known as the doctrine of development or evolution. Thus it comes that there are few words that are more freely used in our time than "progress." We speak familiarly of the nineteenth century as having made more progress in the arts and sciences than any other century that went before, or perhaps (as Mr. A. R. Wallace has recently urged) than all other centuries put together. We speak of our political institutions as having made great progress since the time of the Revolution. We commonly think, also, that we have made some progress, if not quite so great, in manners, in literature, in the appreciation of nature, in sympathy for our fellow-men. And sometimes we tend to go farther, and to think of progress not merely as a characteristic of this "wonderful century," but as a law of the universe, as an aspect of the great cosmic process, showing itself in the development of animal species as well as in the growth of human institutions, extending downward also to the life of plants, and perhaps even to be seen in the structure of rocks and mountains and islands and continents, and in the formation of suns and worlds.

And certainly, whatever may be thought of the larger ques-

---

\* A lecture delivered before the Bristol Ethical Society in October, 1898.

tion about the universe in general, it is difficult to doubt that in almost every important aspect of human life there has been a marked development. Even the pessimism of Carlyle relaxes a little on a general survey of life. "I do not make much," he says, "of 'progress of the species,' as handled in these times of ours; nor do I think you would care to hear much about it. The talk on that subject is too often of the most extravagant, confused sort. Yet, I may say, the fact itself seems certain enough; nay, we can trace out the inevitable necessity of it in the nature of things." Yet, on a closer investigation, there are certain doubts that suggest themselves as to the nature and value of human progress, which it seems of some importance to consider.

The first doubt that presents itself has reference to the general character and value of the progress that has been made. Admitting that the conditions of life have been gradually ameliorated, that laws have been made more just and manners more humane, we may yet ask ourselves whether the change has not been largely mechanical and superficial in its character, and whether it has not been accompanied by a corresponding loss and deterioration. Can we really flatter ourselves, it may be asked, that, with all our advance in the physical sciences and in the mechanical arts that depend on them, and with all our progress in political organization and in the regulation of social forms, our life is better in its most essential elements than that which was lived by the Athenians in their most cultured period or by our own ancestors in the Middle Ages? Can we compare ourselves in intellectual force or artistic sense with the Greeks that surrounded Pericles? And have we not lost something of the fine faith and whole-heartedness by which our own ancestors were distinguished in the best ages of mediæval Christianity? And are not the superficial comfort and refinements of our modern existence poor substitutes for those more important goods? "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers." We have better machinery than any people ever had before; but are our men as satisfactory? We have more comfort in our lives; but have we as much nobility and beauty? This is a kind of

doubt that has been much impressed upon the modern mind by such writers as Carlyle and Ruskin; and, so long as it remains unresolved, it leaves it an open question whether the modern civilization of which so much is heard means a real advance in the life of mankind.

But it is possible to carry our doubts even farther than this. The doubt that has just been stated does not affect the common conviction that advance has been made in the comfort and happiness of life, but only the belief that this implies a general improvement of mankind. A recent German writer (Nietzsche) has said that happiness is not the aim of men, but only of Englishmen; and perhaps even an Englishman may admit that, if happiness accompanies deterioration, it cannot be accepted as the supreme good. But we may go farther than this, and raise a doubt whether even the happiness of mankind has been advanced by the progress of civilization. It was said by the Preacher that increase of knowledge is increase of sorrow; and it has been thought by some that the same may be said of the increase in the complexity of life. Even Adam Smith expressed the view that the happiness of the poor was probably not in general any less than that of the rich, the multiplication of comforts leading only to the multiplication of wants. Again, it is urged by such writers as Mr. Edward Carpenter that civilization in general involves physical deterioration, and with that the loss of happiness. And, at any rate, if this is too extreme a paradox with regard to the more prosperous members of our modern societies, there is at least a good deal of plausibility in the contention that the life of a savage in his native woods is superior, in almost all the important conditions of happiness, to that of the majority of the dwellers in the slums of our large cities. "Hell," it was said by Shelley, "is a city much like London." \* And, indeed,

---

\* "Hell is a city much like London,—

A populous and a smoky city;

There are all sorts of people undone,

And there is little or no fun done;

Small justice shown, and still less pity."

*Peter Bell the Third.*

when the human mind has once embarked on such comparisons of the happiness of the civilized state with that of more primitive conditions, there are hardly any limits to the unfavorableness of the comparisons that may be drawn. Probably most people can to some extent sympathize even with the preference for the state of the lower animals, which has been so emphatically stated by Walt Whitman.

“They do not sweat nor whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented  
With the mania of owning things;  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago;  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.”

But again, even if we grant the intrinsic value of the progress that has been made in material welfare, doubt may still be thrown on its permanence. It may be urged that it is in all probability merely an ephemeral gain. It may be pointed out that it is largely due to accidental circumstances, and may be easily destroyed by others equally accidental. It depends, for instance, it may be said, on the supply of coal and iron, which are not inexhaustible, and on certain scientific discoveries which happen to have a practical bearing. It depends, also, on the preponderance of the Anglo-Saxon race, which is not likely to be perpetual. How different the course of the world might be if the Chinese were to gain preponderance, or even the Russians! Again, it may be pointed out that other civilizations, hardly less advanced than our own, have passed completely away, leaving scarcely a trace behind, or only such a bewildering trace as the Pyramids in Egypt. Have we any reason, then, for supposing that our present civilization, such as it is, has any better chance of being a permanent possession for the world?

Such are some of the doubts that naturally present themselves to men's minds when they reflect a little on the nature of human progress as we see it at the present time; and though at first they may be set aside as idle fears, they have a tendency, when once presented, to recur with a haunting

persistence, and if we yield to them to land us at last in a state of abject pessimism.

Now, we may no doubt steel our minds against such doubts for a time by saying to ourselves that such speculations are wholly idle and futile. And in a sense this is true enough. We cannot possibly foresee the course of events to such an extent as to have any real confidence about the conditions in which life will be lived in future ages; and, even if we could, there is often very little point in asking whether life lived under one set of conditions is better than life lived under another set. It would not be easy to decide whether it is better to be a porpoise or a kangaroo; and the same kind of difficulty meets us when we try to decide about two modes of human life in which the general circumstances are entirely different. In whatever circumstances they are placed, men find themselves with plenty of problems to contend with; and, in general, we may perhaps say that they may realize as valuable an existence in contending with one set of problems as in contending with another set. What Browning says of places seems to apply very largely to all kinds of conditions.

“If we have souls, know how to see and use,  
One place performs, like any other place,  
The proper service every place on earth  
Was framed to furnish man with : serves alike  
To give him note that, through the place he sees,  
A place is signified he never saw.” \*

“The situation,” as Carlyle otherwise puts it, “that has not its Duty, its Ideal, was never yet occupied by man. . . . Thy condition is but the stuff thou art to shape that same Ideal out of: what matters whether such stuff be of this sort or that, so the form thou give it be heroic, be poetic?” With such reflections as these, we may very well settle down to “cultivate our gardens,” to make the best of the conditions in which we find ourselves, without much concern as to whether they are better or worse than others, and as to whether mankind as a whole is progressing or degenerating. And, indeed,

---

\* “Red-Cotton-Night-Cap Country.”

we might go farther, and say that, if there are doubts as to the reality and persistence of progress, there may also be doubts as to whether the persistence of progress is in the end desirable. John Stuart Mill argued in favor of a more or less stationary state in the economic life of mankind ; and it might similarly be argued that this is what is most desirable in life in general. On such grounds, then, it may be said that comparatively little interest attaches to the question whether we are in advance of our fathers, and whether our sons are likely to be in advance of us. Let us cease to trouble ourselves about the larger question of human progress, and content ourselves with making the conditions in which we at present find ourselves as satisfactory as we can.

Now, I am far from denying that there is a good deal of wisdom in such an attitude as this. It is seldom the part of a wise man to concern himself much with remote goods and evils. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and the good, too. But, unhappily for our peace of mind, the good and evil of to-day have nearly always a very close reference to the good and evil of to-morrow, and even to the good and evil of remote generations ; so that even by devoting ourselves to the problems that we find nearest to our hands, we by no means escape from the thought of the future. Even if we but cultivate our gardens, we must sow our seeds with reference to what we believe of future seasons and conditions. "The present," as Leibniz said, "is big with the future." The interest of the present moment is never an interest that is confined to the present moment. It is always in something that we seek to do, something that we hope to bring about, and so the idea of a future end is bound up in it. Hence any doubt about the future of human life is inevitably a doubt about its present as well. If we lose our confidence in what men are to be, we lose also to a large extent our confidence in our present interests and duties. Hence I cannot but believe that it is a vain effort to seek, in any such way as that now suggested, to rid our minds of all concern about human progress. However small and circumscribed our duties and interests may be, they must yet have the most intimate con-

nection with the whole development of human life, and presuppose a certain confidence in it. If we lose faith in mankind, we necessarily lose faith in ourselves, and the significance vanishes from all our deepest interests and obligations. I do not mean, of course, that it is not possible to do much excellent work without any belief in progress. As Mr. Balfour has recently urged, any explicit belief of this kind is comparatively modern;\* and many of the most heroic actions of the ancient world were done in the face of an explicit belief rather in degeneration than in progress. But they were done at least as a desperate effort to check the imminent decline, and implied at any rate that those who did them were not indifferent to the question of human progress. And in modern times the thought of progress has become more explicit. Though it is only recently that we have come to talk about evolution, yet I suppose all through the Christian centuries there has always been some hope that the world will be "saved," that the life of mankind will in some way be made better than it is. If this belief were to be altogether lost, it is hard to calculate how much of the meaning would go out of even the commonest activities in which we are constantly engaged. All of us, I fancy, can feel the force of the question ascribed by Browning to "the famous ones of old":

"Was it for mere fool's-play, make-believe, and mumming,  
So we battled it like men, not boy-like, sulked or whined?  
Each of us heard clang God's 'Come!' and each was coming:  
    Soldiers all, to forward face, not sneaks to lag behind!"

And even in our own unheroic age, could any of us really be content to think that the efforts that are being made for human advancement are mere "fool's-play" and "make-believe"? Could any of us bear to believe that the evils of which we are conscious in our present state would never be in any degree removed or mitigated? Hopeless of a perfect cure for human ills we may very well be. But if we gave up all hope of mitigating them by degrees, it may well be doubted whether any thinking being could regard life as worth living.

---

\* "A Fragment on Progress," in "Essays and Addresses."  
VOL. IX.—NO. 2

Are the lives of the rich always to be empty and idle? Are the lives of the poor always to be wretched, ruined by soul-destroying cares? Is there always to be war, discord, injustice? Perhaps; but at any rate a large part of the interest of life for thoughtful men has always lain in the hope that such evils may be diminished by patient effort. If this hope is an illusion, the best efforts of mankind are turned into vanity. Hence the doubt as to the reality of progress is one that cuts at the very root of human life.

Now, the doubts that have been suggested might no doubt be partly removed by simply confronting them with the facts of experience. Thus, the doubt as to whether our material progress is accompanied by development in the higher artistic and moral faculties might possibly be removed by a careful comparison of modern civilization with that of the Greeks and other older peoples. It might then be shown, as Green, for instance, has shown, that, if in some respects we have a less intense development of particular qualities, yet we have a wider range of sympathies and a more exacting standard of duty.

"We are apt to speak," Green says,\* "as if the life of the Greek or Roman citizen, in the full bloom of municipal civilization, was much fuller and richer than that of the modern citizen under a *régime* of universal freedom and equal rights. For the many we admit the modern system may be a gain, but for the few we take it to be a corresponding loss. Yet this is surely a very superficial view. The range of faculties called into play in any work of social direction or improvement must be much wider, when the material to be dealt with consists no longer of supposed chattels but of persons asserting recognized rights, whose welfare forms an integral element in the social good which the directing citizen has to keep in view. Only if we leave long-suffering, considerateness, the charity which 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things,' with all the art of the moral physician, out of account in our estimate of the realization of the soul's powers,

---

\* "Prolegomena to Ethics," Book III., chap. v.

can we question the greater fulness of the realization in the present life of Christendom, as compared with the highest life of the ancient world." Similarly, Dr. Bosanquet, in a striking passage,\* after quoting the famous expressions from Mrs. Browning, as to our "little thinking if we work our *souls* as nobly as our iron," † lays his finger at once on an obvious point of advance, by asking, "Has there been any civilization before or outside that of modern Christendom in which so noble a trumpet-call could have been sounded by a woman?"

The doubt as to the relative happiness of the civilized man, as compared with the savage, is still more easily removed; for its plausibility seems to exist at all only when we compare civilized life at its worst with savage life at its best. If we compare the best with the best of each, or even the worst with the worst, there can hardly be any possibility of doubt. Even if we take such wretchedness as that of the London slums, it must be remembered that this is not without its mitigations. In illustration of this, I may quote the cheering words with which Mrs. Bosanquet concludes her admirable book on "Rich and Poor." Referring to the saying that "Hell is a city much like London," she goes on to remark, "If this were so, I would cheerfully accept a sentence which should doom me to hell, and would play my part as a citizen to the best of my power; for it would be a city full of pathos and humor, where much that is bad is mingled with all that is human and lovable, where the very fiends who are represented as tormenting the lost are really engaged in works of mercy and brotherly love; a city, above all, where justice and straightforwardness and manly effort never fail to make their influence felt."

As to Walt Whitman's paradox about the animals, that of course was only quoted as an instance of the lengths to which this line of thought might lead us. I suppose his expressions are hardly serious enough for refutation. Nor perhaps, for a

---

\* "Civilization of Christendom," p. 70.

† I feel bound to add also that, if we could really be sure that we are working our iron nobly, there could not be much doubt about our souls. It is rather the bad working of our iron that reveals the flaws in our souls.

different reason, is it worth while to spend much time over the precariousness of our advance in material civilization. Everything that depends on external conditions must be to some extent precarious; but we need not, at any rate, be greatly alarmed by the want of permanence in older forms of civilization; for it does not appear that the scientific basis of material progress was understood by any former age as it is by ours. The continual advance in the discovery of the causes of things in modern times gives ground for hoping that we may learn to have a permanent control over the external conditions with which we have to deal. At least there certainly seems enough ground for confidence to make the effort worth while.

Yet, however much we may comfort ourselves with such reflections as these, they hardly suffice to lay our doubts completely when once they have been fairly raised. We have only appealed to empirical observations; and the results of such observations are always liable to be upset by others. When Carlyle assails our political institutions, when Ruskin attacks our commercial life, when Tolstoi throws doubt on our civilization as a whole, accusing even our art and music of not appealing to a simple taste, and throwing suspicion even on our cleanliness as a sign of degeneration,\* we are apt to feel confused and hardly know what we ought to answer. The only way, I believe, of really meeting such objections is by asking ourselves more definitely what progress really means, by attempting a scientific analysis of the idea, and then asking how far it has actually been realized.

Now, there is a short and easy way that is sometimes resorted to of convincing ourselves from a scientific point of view of the reality of progress. It is thought that the general theory of biological evolution warrants us in believing that the development which is found going on in the world in general cannot fail to make its appearance in human life also. Everywhere, it is urged, we find an advance going on from indefinite incoherent homogeneity to definite coherent

---

\* See his recent work on "Art," and his earlier book entitled "What to Do."

heterogeneity. "Setting out with the human body as a minute part, and ascending from it to greater parts," we find, according to Mr. Herbert Spencer, that "this simultaneity of transformation is equally manifest,—that while each individual is developing, the society of which he is an insignificant unit is developing too; that while the aggregate mass forming a society is becoming more definitely heterogeneous, so likewise is that total aggregate, the earth, of which the society is an inappreciable portion; that while the earth, which in bulk is not a millionth of the solar system, progresses towards its concentrated and completed structure, the solar system similarly progresses; and that even its transformations are but those of a scarcely appreciable portion of our sidereal system, which has at the same time been going through parallel changes."\* But the very vastness of this conception, even if it could be regarded as scientifically demonstrated, may soon convince us that it has but little to do with human aspirations. And this view is further confirmed when we find Mr. Spencer himself protesting against the introduction of teleological considerations into our conception of progress. "The current conception," he says,† "is a teleological one. The phenomena are contemplated solely as bearing on human happiness. Only those changes are held to constitute progress which directly or indirectly tend to heighten human happiness; and they are thought to constitute progress simply because they tend to heighten human happiness. But rightly to understand progress, we must learn the nature of those changes, considered apart from our interests." But if progress is to be thus regarded, it is clear that, even if it can be shown with the utmost scientific rigor that there is a real progress in human life, yet the progress may be such as in no way to make our lives happier or better, but only more complete, more heterogeneous. This point was further brought out, perhaps in rather too antithetical a way, in Huxley's celebrated "Romans Lecture," where the kind of progress that is brought about by the cosmic processes is contrasted with that which

---

\* "First Principles," p. 546.

† "Essays," Vol. I., p. 9.

men are trying to bring about by moral effort; and the one is represented as almost directly opposed to the other. Without pausing to consider how far this opposition can in the end be justified, it seems at least to show that the mere statement of a general doctrine of evolution is not enough to give us confidence in the progress of mankind, in any sense that would suffice to satisfy our human hopes. In order to gain such confidence, we must ask ourselves what we mean by progress, and then ask ourselves what grounds there are for believing that it can be brought about.

Now, I do not think it would be possible in such a lecture as this to attempt any thorough examination of the idea of progress. But perhaps a few general observations may have some use. It seems to me that when we speak of human progress, there are three main aspects which it is well to distinguish,—viz., first, the development of the individual; secondly, the improvement of the material conditions of life; thirdly, the improvement of the social conditions of life. Any progress which did not involve all of these could not, I think, long be regarded as satisfactory. The development of the individual, without the necessary material and social conditions for the maintenance of a complete life, would be left in an utterly precarious state. On the other hand, it is still more certain that the improvement of material and social conditions would be an empty boon if it were not accompanied by the development of the individual. All wise human effort must be directed, therefore, to the advancement of life in all these three aspects; and the only doubts as to human progress that have any real point are doubts as to the possibility of a satisfactory combination of these three aspects. Doubts as to whether they have yet been satisfactorily combined may be set aside as unimportant. "If it isna weel buskit, we'll busk it again." The unsatisfactoriness of what has been or now is only stimulates to renewed effort. The doubt that paralyzes effort is that as to the possibility of improvement. Now, there are, I think, two ways in which a fundamental doubt may be raised with reference to the possibility of human progress in those three aspects to which I have referred. We may say that the

improvement of material conditions is in the end incompatible with the highest development of the individual life; or we may say that there is an ultimate conflict between the good of the individual and the good of society. Let us consider shortly each of these two doubts.

It may be urged, on the one hand, that what we call material improvement is fatal to the development of the individual. Individual development, it may be said, requires struggle. If we make the conditions of life too easy, inferior types will be preserved, and even the better types will be deteriorated from lack of an adequate exercise of their powers. Hence the more we improve the material conditions of life, the more do we interfere with the development of the individual.\* The biological question involved here is quite beyond my province; but there seems at any rate to be no very clear evidence either that the improvement of material conditions diminishes the struggle for existence, or that, if it does, it necessarily leads to deterioration of the race. And, even if all this were shown, there seems to be some possibility of artificial solution, even without resorting to those methods of "social surgery" which have been advocated by Mr. Bradley.† Apart from the biological question, however, there is the more purely economic one, whether the effort after the improvement of material conditions does not inevitably lead to modes of life which are destructive of the higher forms of individual development. Is not the commercial life inimical to the heroic and artistic temper, and in the end destructive of the moral and religious spirit? A view of this kind was very prevalent among the ancient Greeks, and finds expression in the writings of their most serious thinkers; and, if it is less apparent to ourselves, this is perhaps due in large measure to our not really caring so much for the highest types of personal development. This is one of the most serious questions

---

\* For some discussions bearing upon this point, see Dr. Haycraft's book on "Darwinism and Race Progress." Cf. also Mr. Edward Carpenter's book on "Civilization : Its Cause and Cure," and the recent work on "Degeneracy" by Dr. Talbot.

† See INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS, Vol. IV., No. 3.

by which we are confronted in modern times; but on the whole it can hardly be doubted that it is capable of being answered in a satisfactory way. The answer seems to be that for a time the work of bringing the powers of nature under control for the use of mankind has a narrowing influence, but that this influence need not be permanent. It seems to arise largely from the fact that the first efforts to improve our material conditions take the form of devising machinery; and, until men have learned to use this machinery, it tends to tyrannize over their lives. But, when the problem comes to be, more and more, not how to invent and make machinery, but how to use it for the good of mankind, there seems every reason to believe that this narrowing influence will cease to make itself felt; that it will no longer be even epigrammatically true, in Emerson's phrase, that "things are in the saddle and ride mankind," but that men will once more assume the mastery and put things in their proper place.\* How this is to be done is no doubt a great problem which must for a long time to come occupy the attention of those who make economic conditions the study of their lives; but I see no reason at all for thinking that it is a hopelessly insoluble problem.

The doubt which is thus raised, however, is intimately connected with another one, which is even more far-reaching,—viz., with the question whether there is not a certain opposition between the progress of the individual and the development of social institutions. This is a question that has often been raised in different forms. It appears, for instance, in the famous paradox of Mandeville, that "private vices are public benefits," and in those other kindred ideas which so much of the ingenuity of our eighteenth century moralists was spent in refuting. In our own time, however, it has reappeared in a

---

\* It should be observed that when Aristotle regards the money-making life as unnatural, his reason for so describing it seems to be that he regards it as being taken as an end in itself, and so as having no definite limit. This is no doubt a constant danger of the commercial life, but it is one to which the military life also is in some degree exposed. The chief hope for the modern world lies in the possibility of reducing all such aspects of life to their proper position as means. See Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics," I., v. 8; "Politics," I., ix.; Stewart's "Notes," Vol. I., p. 68; Newman's "Politics of Aristotle," p. 130.

more subtle guise; and I believe I cannot more profitably occupy the closing part of this lecture than in calling attention to two recent attempts that have been made to bring out the fundamental opposition between the individual and society.

The two attempts to which I wish to call your attention have been made by two exceedingly different writers,—Benjamin Kidd and Friedrich Nietzsche. Neither of these can perhaps quite be described as a philosophical thinker; but both have produced a great popular impression, by giving forcible expression to certain ideas that were more or less in the air. Both rest their views on the idea of evolution, but they think of this in very different ways, and point to very different goals. Yet they are at one in emphasizing a certain opposition between the life of the individual and that of his social environment.

Mr. Kidd brings out the opposition in this way. He urges that the maintenance and development of human society depends mainly on the presence of an altruistic spirit, a spirit of devotion to the common good. But when the individual reflects, he finds no rational ground for such devotion. It is not reasonable for him to seek anything else than his own personal happiness; and this is often in opposition to the public welfare. Hence on public grounds it is necessary to appeal to what is described as an ultra-rational sanction, some influence which cannot be seen to be reasonable, but which men feel bound to obey. This influence he finds in religion. There is thus an opposition between what the individual sees to be reasonable and what he feels to be right. The former would guide him to his own good; but for the sake of society he must obey the latter. Altruism must, consequently, be encouraged to develop itself in opposition to the reason of the individual, and in opposition to what he perceives to be his own greatest good.

The point of view of Nietzsche is almost diametrically opposed to this. The great evil of modern times he believes to lie in its excessive altruism,—an altruism which has been cherished by the religious spirit, and especially by Christianity. Christianity inculcated a system of morality founded on the

idea of self-sacrifice. This Nietzsche describes as the morality of slaves. He thinks that it rests essentially on weakness, on the inability to assert one's self. To this he would oppose a more masterful morality, which should consist in the effort to assert and realize one's self. "Be distinguished" (*sei vornehm*) would be one of its leading commandments. By the exercise of such a morality he hopes to develop the mode of existence which he describes as that of the more than man (*Uebermensch*), of which he seems to regard such a man as Goethe as the harbinger.

What these two views have in common is the doctrine that the realization of the individual is naturally opposed to devotion to the good of the race. Of course, I do not mean to say that either Kidd or Nietzsche represents this opposition as absolute. A careful study of their writings would no doubt reveal many qualifications of this view. But on the whole it seems fair to say that both of them think that an individual who reflected carefully on his own highest good, and chose what it seems most reasonable to choose for himself, would avoid the attitude of self-devotion to the public good, which such a religion as Christianity demands. But while Nietzsche accepts this result as a good one, Kidd thinks that it must be counteracted by ultra-rational sanctions. Now, it is easy to see that there is a certain plausibility, and perhaps even a certain truth, in the views of both these writers. We have probably all known people whose self-devotion to public ends might be described as weak and morbid, people who are always attending meetings or conducting classes or doing something for their neighbors, who never possess their souls in peace, and whose work is often rendered futile from want of inner self-development and calm reflection. To such people one would be inclined to preach, with Nietzsche, a more masterly morality ; to say, if not "Be distinguished," at least "Be strong ; do not weakly yield to every public claim that seems to come before you, but choose rather what can be done with some effect, and without undue sacrifice of your own powers for future action and for future development." On the other hand, the opposite type of person is equally familiar ; one who can never

throw himself with any heartiness into any form of public duty, because he is afraid of interfering with his own career. In dealing with such, one would be glad even to resort to Mr. Kidd's ultra-rational sanction, if there were no other means of rousing them to action and enthusiasm. But while it is thus clear enough that there is a possibility of erring on two opposite sides, it is by no means apparent that there is any fundamental opposition between devotion to one's own greatest good and devotion to the greatest good of mankind. Indeed, it is evident rather that he who weakly sacrifices himself for others hardly ever confers any real benefit upon them. If a wise mercy is twice blest, a foolish one is twice cursed. And it is equally clear that the man who is incapable of a wise self-devotion misses the highest zest of life, and does not really realize himself. Why, then, is it that we still find popular writers insisting on this opposition?

It springs, I believe, from an error which is at least as old as Hobbes, and which had to a large extent the sanction of Bishop Butler, the error of supposing that there is such a thing as a self-centred individual life, capable of finding its realization and its happiness within itself. Hobbes thought that every one necessarily pursues his own power and happiness, and that this naturally opposes itself to the power and happiness of others; and even Bishop Butler held that, "when we sit down in a cool hour," it seems unreasonable to aim at anything else than our own individual happiness,—meaning by that something which it is possible to distinguish from the realization of public welfare. But is any such self-centred life possible? Surely not much reflection is needed to see that the happiness of life can be found only in the extension of our circle of interests. How much truer was Aristotle's account of the man who is truly self-loving!\* "If what a man always set his heart upon were that he, rather than another, should do what is just or temperate, or in any other way virtuous,—if, in a word, he were always claiming the noble course of conduct, no one would call him self-loving, and no

---

\* "Nicomachean Ethics," Book IX., chap. viii.

one would reproach him. And yet such a man would seem to be more truly self-loving. At least, he takes for himself that which is noblest and most truly good, and gratifies the ruling power in himself, and in all things obeys it. But just as the ruling part in a state or in any other system seems, more than any other part, to be the state or the system, so also the ruling part of a man seems to be most truly the man's self. He therefore who loves and gratifies this part of himself is most truly self-loving. . . . Those who beyond other men set their hearts on noble deeds are welcomed and praised by all; but if all men were vieing with each other in the pursuit of what is noble, and were straining every nerve to act in the noblest possible manner, the result would be that both the wants of the community would be perfectly satisfied, and at the same time each individually would win the greatest of all good things. . . . The good man, therefore, ought to be self-loving." If we understand self-love in this sense, as meaning the effort to develop what is highest in our own individual nature, and so to secure the richest form of happiness, it seems clear that this is inseparable from our interest in the realization of the most complete form of social welfare. On the whole, I believe it will be found that all the experience of life goes to show that what is reasonable is real and coheres with itself. The effort after the kind of welfare that we reasonably seek for ourselves—the development of our most important powers—fits in with and is perfectly compatible with the effort after the kind of welfare that we reasonably seek for others. As Spinoza said, "The highest good is common to all, and all may equally enjoy it." It is, on the whole, only the effort after unreasonable forms of welfare that leads to contradiction and conflict. If, then, we take as the goal of progress the attainment of the rational welfare of ourselves and others, there seems no reason for thinking that this cannot be attained. Hence the opposition between the good of the individual and the good of society seems on the whole to be superficial.\*

---

\* Cf. article on "Self-Assertion and Self-Denial," INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS, Vol. V., No. 3.

On such grounds as these, then, I think it is possible to retain our belief in the feasibility of human progress, in spite of all the objections that can be raised. The grounds, indeed, on which this belief rests I have only been able very imperfectly to indicate. What I have chiefly aimed at bringing home to you is, on the one hand, that we must not be content with the surface appearance of progress, but must try to understand what progress really is; and, on the other hand, that we must not suppose that progress is a fatal fact in human life, which is bound to come to us whether we will or no. On the whole, I believe, we are likely to have just as much progress as we really try to have, and just of the kind that we really try to have. He that seeks finds. If we have in Great Britain set ourselves—as perhaps we have too much done—to have a merely material progress, to buy and sell more than any other people in the world, we may very probably succeed in doing so. But how much shall we be the better for it? If, on the other hand, we determine to have progress of another kind; if we remember the better traditions of our race, and rouse ourselves, in Milton's phrase, "as an eagle mewing her mighty youth;" if we seek not merely for material progress, but for progress in education, in art, in philosophy, in social justice, in all that contributes to the highest development of individual and social life, I confess I see no reason why we should not find that too. Only we must not suppose that it will come of itself. It will come only if we fix our minds constantly upon it, and seriously set ourselves to understand what its realization involves.

J. S. MACKENZIE.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, CARDIFF.